"Wood for various purposes seems to be obtained most largely from the vicinity of 'Big Stick island.' (1) This place, about thirty-five miles east of Great Bear lake on the southeast branch of the Dease river, is an area of several hundred acres of excellent timber. It is surrounded by the Barren lands, and is recognized as a good hunting ground both by the Eskimos and by the Indians of Great Bear lake. It is here, when the Indians are hunting, after their return from the summer trips to the trading posts, that the meeting between the two peoples takes place.'"

"1. Cf. Stefansson, Anthrop. Papers, A.M.N.H., Vol. XIV, pt.I, pp.82-3; My Life with the Eskimo, p.222."

1: Jenness--56 (1913-16) 1922 Copper Eskimo
116, 313, 137

"Materials from which to construct a dwelling are very limited among the Copper Eskimos. There is no standing timber anywhere along the coast, and the shores are almost bare of drift-wood. To obtain the wood they need for sleds and household furniture the natives must travel south for many days far into the interior. It is true that a little spruce still grows within thirty and even twenty miles of the coast in the valley of the Coppermine river, but it is all too small and stunted to be of any great value. The natives at the western end of Coronation gulf obtain their timber from the neighbourhood of Great Bear lake, while the eastern people often travel down to the Akilinnik river for the same purpose, though the journey takes them half the year."

2: Stefansson--18-19 (1908-12) 1914 Copper Eskimo
116, 313

"Driftwood gets gradually scarcer as one goes east along the coast, although from the point of view of a traveling party that needs wood for fuel there is plenty to Cape Bexley and even beyond. There are few places where you can travel five miles at a stretch without finding a deposit of [19] driftwood sufficient to supply a camp for a week. The sticks you find, however, get smaller as you proceed east and more water-worn. They are excellent for firewood, however, as they are dry through lying on a rocky beach. Only in the mouths of rivers, such as Inman River, did we have trouble with wet and rotten wood where it was imbedded in sand or river mud."

2: Stefansson--22 (1908-12) 1914 Copper Eskimo
116, 313

"Although wood is not used for fuel except to a slight extent in summer, the occurrence of trees on the Coppermine and the head of Dease River, draws people from great distances to these places each summer for they need wood continually for various things, and driftwood of a character suitable for implements and utensils is found only on the coast of the Gulf."

2: Stefansson--22-23 (1908-1912) 1914 Copper Eskimo
116, 133, 313

"Before quitting this geographical discussion it is worth while to comment especially upon the anomalous economic importance of the Mackenzie River to all the district west of Coronation Gulf and east of Point Barrow. Not only does the huge volume of warm water temper somewhat the climate at the immediate mouth of the river and alter the seasons to a degree, but the river also supplies building material for the construction of houses for more than one thousand miles of coast and material for the construction of the framework of boats and for all the smaller wooden things that the Eskimo need. Most of this wood comes from the Liard branch of the Mackenzie River. Although a great river, the Liard does not bring down as much driftwood as does the Peace or the Slave and it is possible that even [23] the Athabaska River may carry as much wood as does the Liard: but unfortunately practically all the wood brought by the Peace and Slave is deposited on the shores of Great Slave Lakes. On neither of these lakes is the driftwood of any considerable economic importance while on the Arctic coast it would be of incalculable value to the Eskimo, should they survive for any considerable period, or to the white men, should numbers of them ever come to occupy the coast."

2: Stefansson--85 (1908-12) 1914 Copper Eskimo
116, 411, 313

"The bows of the Akuliakattagmiut are generally made of driftwood, as well as those of the Haneragmiut and the Victoria Islanders north and west of them. All these get the materials from the mainland shore near Cape Bexley, except the Kanhiryuarmiut who secure driftwood to some extent on their own coast, but also on the west coast of Banks Island."

28: Jenness E-5 (1914-1916) 1946
NDS Copper Eskimo NDS

CHAPTER I

MATERIAL RESOURCES

Few people have been called upon to sustain life and perpetuate their race on such meagre resources as the Copper Eskimo. Even if they had been acquainted with agriculture the climate debarred it, just as it debarred the growth of trees except in two or three sheltered valleys along the southern fringe of their territory. It restricted not only the flora but the fauna, leaving the natives dependent for their food and for much of their equipment on one land animal, the seasonally migrating caribou, and two sea mammals, the foetid and the bearded seals, supplemented by such fish as they could capture in rivers, lakes, and bays. Ignorant of all metals except their native copper, which seemed to them only a malleable stone, and cut off from contact with any but neighbouring tribes, little or no more advanced than themselves, they had to build up their lives on the scanty resources provided by their own narrow environment, and rely on their own ingenuity to supply all their needs.

The resources provided by their environment fall naturally into four groups:

Wood
Stone (including native copper and other minerals)
Bone, antler, horn, ivory
Hides and sinew.

WOOD

The Copper Eskimo obtained their wood from two sources. First, there was the driftwood, mainly spruce and cottonwood, carried to the ocean by Mackenzie River far to the westward and borne by the winds and currents to Dolphin and Union Strait and western bays of Victoria Island. Then in the valleys of three rivers that flowed into Coronation Gulf, Coppermine, Napaktauktauk, and Tree, there stood scattered groves of spruce, small and stunted, a few miles from the coast, but larger as one proceeded south. Far to the southeast, too, near Thelon River, were other stands of spruce that the Eskimo from Bathurst Inlet and from the eastern shores of Victoria Island occasionally visited in their wanderings. Thus the Copper Eskimo had abundant wood to satisfy all their needs; but as driftwood was very scarce in many districts, and the standing timber on the southern fringe of their territory could be reached only after a long journey overland, which many natives were disinclined to make, manufactured objects of wood were among the commonest articles of trade and passed freely from one end of the territory to the other. Moreover, so crude were the Eskimo tools, and so great the labour of cutting down the trees and hewing the timber into shape, that any object of moderate size, such as a sled-runner, a table, or even a tent-pole, commanded a high price.[1]

The principal tools used in working wood were the adze and the whittling knife (*See* pp. 100 and 103). Bone or antler wedges, generally made for each occasion and immediately discarded, served to split small logs and planks; they were driven home with boulders. Lacking saws, the Eskimo shortened a plank in one or other of three ways: they hacked it with the adze; gouged it across with the grooving tool (*See* p. 100); or they drilled a line of holes across it with the bow drill.

[1] Cf. Robertson, Y.: The Robertson-Anderson Arctic Expedition: Anth. Papers, Amer. Mus. of Nat. Hist., vol. XIV, pt. I, sec. II, de F et al., New York, 1914.

28: Jenness E-5 (1914-1916) 1946
ND8 Copper Eskimo ND8

CHAPTER V

MISCELLANEOUS

493 *Sleds.* Copper Eskimo sleds had neither side pieces nor handles, but consisted merely of two stout runners joined by a number of crossbars. They averaged in length 14 or 15 feet, but some measured over 20 feet and others [487] less than 4. Sleds under 10 feet in length, however, were rather uncommon; being too short to carry all the household furniture, they served for short trips only, for transporting goods to and from the caches, and, when the family was blessed (or cursed) with many possessions, for relieving the main sled of part of its load.

493 The most important parts of a sled were naturally the runners, for suitable • 313 logs seldom drifted up on the shores and the forests lay many days' travel to [437] the south. Consequently, both single runners and the completed sleds were valuable articles of trade, current from one end of the country to the other, and natives from remote districts made long journeys to the spruce woods on Coppermine River to manufacture sleds for themselves. Under these conditions, one neither expected, nor could I find, any significant differences in size or shape between the sleds of different districts. One typical of several that I measured had the following dimensions:

	Ft.	Ins.
Length	16	1
Number of crossbars	14	
Breadth between runners	1	8
Width of runners at top		2½
Width of runners at bottom		2
Height of runners		10
Thickness of bone and mud shoeing		2

493 The runners of this sled had been shod with bones from a whale that 321 drifted ashore near the eastern end of Dolphin and Union Strait; but the great majority lacked both this bone shoeing, and the shoeing of decayed driftwood that has been described by Stefansson,[1] though it escaped my own observation.

493 The same writer says that "In the fall, when the sled is to be used sod is 823 cut in strips as long as convenient and about three inches thick and four inches wide. Lengthwise, along the flat side of these is cut a groove the width of the sled runner and the sod is put under the runners as shoeing. With a little water these are securely frozen to the bottom of the runners, the fuzz of the half-decayed wood holding them securely. The bottom of the runners is then rounded off with an adze or knife so the sod takes the form of a longitudinally bisected cylinder."

[114] I myself did not see this method of cutting and attaching the mud. The natives with whom I travelled on Victoria Island in the autumn of 1915 dug up their mould with mattocks, shredded it inside their snow-huts to remove the roots (which would tend to produce cracks), mixed it with water, and kneaded it into soft balls, each rather larger than a baseball, which they laid along the bottoms of the runners, kneaded together, and smoothed, first with their hands, then, after the mud had frozen, with their snow knives. A few weeks later they patched this shoeing in exactly the same way, after it had been chipped by sharp upstanding stones during their overland journey to the coast. Thenceforward it lasted throughout the winter, although every time a sled was used

[1] Anth. Papers, Am. Mus. Nat. Hist., vol. XIV, p. 70.

29: Jenness E-5 (1914-1916) 1959
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Krusenstern to intercept the herds of caribou that were now migrating northward from their winter home on the Barren Lands. Both these camps we passed without stopping, glad that the few logs of driftwood along the coast made it necessary to seek their blubber-lamps for drying our boots and mittens. The wood petered out just beyond Cape Krusenstern, and we did lodge one night in a native's tent; but when Cox tried to take observations outside for latitude and longitude, his sextant and artificial horizon attracted so many curious observers that he seldom caught a glimpse of the sun. The long-suffering topographer finally became so ruffled that we hastily left the settlement and camped seven miles away beside a large log of cottonwood that provided enough fuel for three days.

Hardly had we pitched our tent when a sled appeared coming up from the south. The travellers were Anderson and Castel, returning from their unsuccessful attempt to reach Fort Norman. With infinite labour they had struggled through deep snow from the valley of the Coppermine to Dease River. There Anderson had expected to find white men, or at least Indians working for them, who would carry the mail to Fort Norman before the ice broke up; but the country was deserted. The winter was then so advanced that if he pushed on to Fort Norman he could not return to Bernard Harbour in time to organize our scientific work for the spring and summer. He

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bones. More embarrassing still, Icehouse insisted on frying me the liver in back fat, as I had often done for myself; only instead of pounding the fat between two stones before she placed it in the pan, she made quite sure that it would melt by chewing it!

During our march south, Ikpuck and The Runner visited the coast to search for driftwood, returning with a fine plank that had probably washed overboard from some vessel. So unusual a prize led to considerable discussion. At first they proposed to convert it into two sled-runners, since it required less shaping than the rude logs they generally trimmed down for that purpose; but as both their sleds were in good condition they finally decided to make fish-spears, and Ikpuck split the plank carefully from end to end by means of small wedges of antler driven home with a heavy stone. He then split each section, obtaining four stout poles which he planed and smoothed with his hunting-knife. The care he expended on the task, and his manifest joy at its successful completion, made me realize the handicap under which these people laboured through the scarcity of wood in their country. If I may compare his fish-spears with a product of our own civilization, each pole had the value of a first-class magazine rifle.

All was well in our old camp at Bad Creek, where The Listener's wife had stayed to dry our meat; if anxiety or loneliness had troubled her during her nine days'

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"Perhaps."

"You can use it for dog-food, you know."

"Yes." And I continued on.

"By the way, I'm Big-Tooth, you know."

"Yes, Big-Tooth."

"By the way—". But I pretended not to hear him and hurried to overtake Patsy. Big-Tooth was a good fellow and deservedly popular; yet even his countrymen, whose own minds moved in constant circles round the material present, took to flight whenever he joined in a conversation.

On reaching the islands we erected a tent inside an unusually large snow-hut that opened into Ikpuck's dwelling. This was an admirable arrangement for two reasons; the hut gave us shelter from the wind, and the tent made it possible to set up a stove where we could burn some of the driftwood that lined the western beaches of the island. Here, with more privacy, we made another attempt to investigate the mythology and religion of the people. Ikpuck and Icehouse gladly told us all they knew, and though not well versed in the traditional lore of their people, they could direct us to better informants. We then closeted ourselves with two old men, whose hearts we warmed with some hard biscuits and cups of steaming chocolate. The comfortable tent and the unusual beverage loosened their tongues, and when one man

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pleasure jaunt at this season, and I could search the coast-line for the ruins of ancient habitations.

The journey, outward and return, lasted three weeks, for we travelled leisurely, enjoying to the full the clear atmosphere and bright, warm sunshine that had succeeded the winter blizzards and cold. Patches of bare ground here and there relieved the monotony of the white snow, the chirping of spring birds filled the air, and numerous seals basked on the surface of the ice outside their breathing-holes. We saw several tent-rings near the shore, and an arrow and other objects lying beside two human skulls, grim relics of a forgotten tragedy. But what intrigued us most was the discovery of three stumps, rotted almost to ground level, that indicated quite clearly the site of an exceedingly ancient house.

All the Eskimo tribes in the western Arctic, where the coast-line is littered with large spruce and cottonwood trees brought down by the Mackenzie and Yukon Rivers, dwell in houses built of wood. But driftwood is so scarce in the Coronation Gulf area that the natives often made long journeys overland to distant forests in the interior in order to obtain even the small amount of timber required for sleds and narrow tables. Their only fixed dwellings were the huts of snow with which we had become so familiar; houses built wholly or partly of wood were entirely outside their knowledge. Even their traditions failed to record such houses,